Assistive Technology

What Is Assistive Technology?

Assistive Technology, also called AT, is a tool or machine that helps you live or work more on your own. Activities that you may not be able to do on your own right now may be possible with assistive technology. The tools allow you to carry out housekeeping, self-care tasks, work tasks, as well as talking, learning, and participating in free-time activities. Some tools are complex and would require a commitment from you to learn how to use them.

AT for self-care might include eating and drinking tools, bathing aides or motorized scooters. Office tasks can be made easier with the use of special software, adjustable desks and chairs, special keyboards and mice, or Braille and reading systems. AT that helps you talk with others includes speech machines, TTYs (teletypewriters), picture boards, and talking notepads. AT for learning consists of games, software, tools and tapes that teach reading, writing, and math. See the sidebar on this page for a few examples of AT for vision, hearing, and mobility disabilities.

An assessment helps determine what AT is best for you. See the back of this fact sheet for information on what to think about when being matched for an AT device.

Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP)

MD TAP is a program of the Maryland Department of Disabilities. MD TAP teaches people about using assistive technology. MD TAP can also show you AT machines and tools to help you find the one that best meets your needs. Having this support to find and try AT is important to help you go to work.

Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program

Because the cost of AT may be more than you can afford, MD TAP and the Maryland Department of Disabilities run the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program. This program gives low-interest loans to people who live in Maryland. Other people, including your family, can help you in asking for the loan.

You can receive a loan application by calling MD TAP. Not everyone gets a loan. However, this loan program has fewer rules than regular bank loans, making it easier for more people to receive loans.

Loan amounts range from $500 to $30,000, and you can use the loan to buy many kinds of AT. The loans can be used for more than just AT. You can buy training to use the tools, extended warranties, and maintenance plans.

The website for MD TAP is www.mdtap.org. Other contact information for MD TAP and the AT Guaranteed Loan Program is listed in the resource section of this fact sheet.

Vision

- Screen magnifiers
- Screen readers
- Video magnifiers
- Reading systems
- Braille embossers
- Braille translation
- Accessible media players

Hearing

- Amplified phones
- Amplified ringers
- TTYs
- Specialized alarms
- Signal systems
- Specialized software

Mobility

- Voice recognition software
- Touch screens
- Head / eye controls
- Word prediction software
- Specialized keyboards, mice and other input devices

This fact sheet and others can be found at www.mdod.maryland.gov and www.mdworkforcepromise.org.

*Questions?
Contact the Maryland Department of Disabilities.*

Additional AT Funding Options

In addition to the AT Guaranteed Loan Program, you have other choices to help you buy your assistive technology tools and machines.

Place of Employment

Your place of employment pays for AT when the AT tool is a reasonable accommodation for which you are eligible to receive. It may be helpful to give your supervisor information about tax credits and incentives that can help with the cost. Ask for the fact sheet entitled *Tax Incentives/Credits* which outlines these incentives for businesses.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) may be able to buy AT for you if it will increase your ability to go to work or to keep working. To be most effective, AT should be considered early in the process. Your counselor will talk with you about your needs and arrange for an assessment either through the Workforce Technology Center Rehabilitation Technology Services or through an approved community AT provider. This will give you an opportunity to try different types of technology to figure out what will work best for you. Training and follow-up evaluations should be provided. You must meet eligibility requirements to receive services from DORS.

Social Security Work Incentives

If you receive Social Security disability benefits, you might be able to use Work Incentives to help you buy AT. These work incentives are not easy to understand. You should make sure that you talk about them with an expert. Benefits, Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) projects have staff trained specifically on SSA Work Incentives. Contact information for BPAOs is listed in the resource section of this fact sheet. You can learn more about SSA's work incentives in the fact sheet entitled *Think You Can't Work? Think Again.*

Veterans Administration

The Veterans Administration may buy AT if you are a Veteran with a disability. See the resource section of this fact sheet for contact information for Veterans Affairs at the U.S. Veterans Administration.

AT Assessment: Things to Consider

What tasks are difficult for you?
◆ Will the use of AT help you complete these tasks more independently? Will you be able to use the AT in different places (work, home, social situations)?

What have you tried before?
◆ What ways of doing things have you tried? What materials, equipment, or tools have you used in the past?

How involved will you be in the process?
◆ Will you be part of the decision making to figure out what AT you should try? What do you hope the AT device will do for you? Will you have a chance to try it before buying it?

How will you know if the AT device is a good fit for you?
◆ Will you be trained on the new AT device? Will you actually use it? Will the AT device help you meet your goals?

Resources

Maryland Service Providers
Maryland State Dept. of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
Voice: (410) 554-9385 / (888) 554-0334
TTY: (410) 554-9411
Email: dors@dors.state.md.us
Website: www.dors.state.md.us

Maryland Technology Assistance Program
Maryland AT Guaranteed Loan Program
Voice: (800) 832-4827
TTY: (866) 881-7488
Email: mdtap@mdtap.org
Website: www.mdtap.org

Additional Information
Benefits InfoSource Main Office
Voice: (301) 277-2839
TTY: Use Maryland Relay 711
Website: www.innow.org

Benefits Resource Center
Voice: (410) 444-1400
TTY: (800) 735-2258
Email: mcil@mcil-md.org
Website: www.mcil-md.org

DisabilityInfo.gov
www.DisabilityInfo.gov is a website that has information on assistive technology for individuals with disabilities.

Family Center on Technology and Disability
Voice: (202) 884-8068
Email: fctd@aed.org
Website: www.fctd.info

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
Voice / TTY: (800) 526-7234
Email: jan@jan.wvu.edu
Website: www.jan.wvu.edu

Learning Independence Through Computers (LINC)
Voice: (410) 659-5462
TTY: (410) 843-0219
Website: www.linc.org

Maryland Department of Disabilities
Voice / TTY: (410) 767-3660
Voice / TTY: (800) 637-4113
Email: mdod@mdod.state.md.us
Website: www.mdod.maryland.gov

Maryland Disability WorkFORCE Information Exchange
Voice: (301) 662-0099
TTY: (301) 662-4853
Email: info@mdworkforcepromise.org
Website: www.mdworkforcepromise.org

U.S. Veterans Administration, Veterans Affairs
Voice: (800) 827-1000 (National Office)
Website: www.va.gov